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LIFESTYLE COLUMNISTS

@ your library: Learn the best pet for you at your library

Yesterday 9:00 p.m.

As everyone knows, pets are a huge responsibility. Feeding, grooming, training, health care — all are part of the responsibility of caring for a pet. If you have fish, then there's no worry about training or grooming, but cleaning the aquarium makes up for it. If you've never had a pet before, or are considering a new one, let your Abilene Public Library help you make an informed choice.

Sometimes folks forget that pets are a commitment that will most likely last for many years. Consider pets as part of the family, rather like children that require care year after year, before you buy or go to the shelter.

"The Perfect Match: a Buyer's Guide to Dogs" by Chris Walkowicz or "The Right Dog for You: Choosing a Breed that Matches Your Personality, Family, and Lifestyle" by Daniel F. Tortora are a couple of titles that will influence a decision on what dog to get.

For cats try "The Ultimate Cat Book: a Comprehensive Visual Guide to Cats, Cat Breeds, and Cat Care" by Alan Edwards or

"The Cat Encyclopedia." "Choosing a Small Mammal" by Dennis Kelsey-Wood can help with those choices. We also have many books on individual breeds, species and types of animals.

Choosing when to get a pet is as important as choosing the type of pet to get. If the family moves frequently, housing problems may occur with rules against pets. If traveling overseas there are mandatory quarantine times for pets. Some pets do not travel well and stress about the experience. Allergies to pets affect some people. "The Sneeze-free Cat Owner" and "Sneeze-free Dog Breeds" by Diane Morgan presents some solutions for allergies.

Starting college, having a baby or beginning a time- and attention-intensive project at work can be stressful, and such times are not conducive to getting a new pet. If a dog is already part of the family and a baby is on the way, "Good Dog, Happy Baby: Preparing Your Dog for the Arrival of Your Child" by Michael Wombacher provides information on preparing the dog for the arrival of a new family member.

Awareness of possible health problems of different breeds may make a choice easier — or harder. Even mutts are influenced by the predominant gene pool. Also, training may be simpler or more difficult depending on the characteristics of the chosen breed. Both house training and obedience training require time and patience. The recommendation is to keep the training session short.

Many titles exist to help with training. These include Cesar Millan's "Cesar's Rules: Your Way to Train a Well-behaved Dog," "Training for Both Ends of the Leash: a Guide to Cooperation Training for You and Your Dog" by Kate Perry and

"I [love] My Dog!: the All-around Guide to Choosing, Training, Grooming and Caring for Your Best Friend" by Laura Moss.

There are expenses each year for pets. If you're unprepared to meet these expenses, do not get a pet. If you're unable to make the time to train and play with a pet, don't get one. A stuffed toy is also soft and cuddly and doesn't eat, make messes, or require visits to a vet and attention from its owner. It's a one-time expense that will sit nicely on a bed, couch or shelf until the owner has time for it. "Knit Your Own Cat: Easy-to-follow Patterns for 16 Frisky Felines" by Sally Muir and Joanna Osborne may help with that.

We've really barely scratched the surface of all the considerations that go into bringing a new pet into your home, but we hope you'll remember your Abilene Public Library can help you make sure your pet experience is a winner!

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